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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION
WASHINGTON

January 24, 1942

OFFICE OF INFORMATION MEMORANDUM NO. 20

Clearance of Broadcasting Schedules with Office of Facts and Figures

I attach letter to Secretary Wickard from Mr. Archibald MacLeish, Director, Office of Facts and Figures, notifying us of the establishment in the Office of Facts and Figures of a central coordinating point for government radio broadcasting.

Mr. Lewis, in charge of this operation, has held one meeting of the heads of information in government departments. At that meeting he reported the following preliminary plans:

1. The Office of Facts and Figures will:
 - (a) form a working committee of government information heads to work out the policies covering coordination of government broadcasting to effectuate the war program;
 - (b) maintain a file of schedules of broadcasts by government departments on networks and individual stations;
 - (c) probably establish a system of priorities covering requests for time for all government agencies to the networks. (The specifications on this part of the operation are yet to be written.)
 - (d) probably negotiate with the networks for the assignment of time to government agencies in the future. (This will not affect Department of Agriculture participation in the National Farm and Home Hour; that time already having been arranged for and there being no disposition on the part of the Office of Facts and Figures to ask us to discontinue it.)
 - (e) try to arrange with networks and stations to make available script writing, casting, and production assistance to government departments;
 - (f) arrange with advertising agencies and sponsors for the use of slogans and action persuading announcements in connection with sponsored programs, with the aim of arranging a dispersion of the different slogans and action persuading announcements through the broadcasting day so as to give citizens

some comprehension of the entire scope of the nation's war program and their individual parts in it;

- (g) arrange with stations for station break and sustaining program announcements on the various phases of the nation's war program and appeals to citizens to play their proper part in the program.

2. The Office of Facts and Figures will not:

- (a) try to clear scripts of broadcasts by government agencies;
- (b) try to negotiate arrangements for government agencies for time on individual stations.

Other pertinent information for you:

Mr. Lewis has resigned his position as Vice President of the Columbia Broadcasting System and gone on the government payroll full time; his chief assistant, Mr. Douglas Meservey, likewise has resigned his position as Assistant to the Vice President, National Broadcasting Company, and is full time on the government payroll. Lewis and Meservey undertake to act as expeditors to carry forward the policies worked out by the committee of government information heads described under 1 (a) above. The whole spectrum of things we have been struggling with, such as policy toward sponsorship programs originated by government agencies, will come before this committee for determination in the light of war-time needs of the radio audience for information from the government, and the most effective ways of getting that information to the audience through cooperation of the radio industry. Both Lewis and Meservey regard radio as primarily an entertainment medium and will urge government broadcast managers to program their stuff so as not to drive away the audience. The conference with government information heads was held Tuesday, one with the networks Wednesday, one with the advertising agencies Thursday, one is in progress today with the National Association of Broadcasters. More later when Lewis brings the government broadcasters back together again.

Meantime, better be getting hold of your schedules of broadcasts that you have arranged independently of this office. We shall have to report the whole line-up of the Department's broadcasting schedules within the next ten days.

Morse Salisbury
Director of Information

Attachment

THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 14, 1942

Honorable Claude R. Wickard
Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have today received from Mr. Stephen Early a communication reading in part as follows:

"The time has come when a central clearing point within the Government should be created to give guidance to Government departments and agencies and to the radio industry as a whole concerning inquiries originating within the Government and received by the Government from the broadcasting companies and stations and to handle certain Government programs on the networks within the United States.

"I may tell you therefore, by direction of the President, that the Radio Division of the Office of Facts and Figures, headed by William Lewis, is designated to carry out this work under your supervision.

"It is requested that you advise all departments and agencies of the Government, as well as the national networks and the Committee on Defense Information of the National Association of Broadcasters, that this assignment has been given to the Radio Division, OFF."

In accordance with this direction I have pleasure in informing you that the services of Mr. Lewis and the facilities of OFF will be available for the purposes indicated. Mr. Lewis will be happy to clear requests for radio time, and to advise with respect to radio programs should you wish to call upon him. It is suggested that government information officers be informed of this arrangement and assured that the services of Mr. Lewis and staff are at their disposal in connection with any question relating to government radio programs.

Faithfully yours,

/s/ Archibald MacLeish

Archibald MacLeish,
Director, Office of Facts and Figures

